

THE AUSTRALIAN

# TAFE Teacher



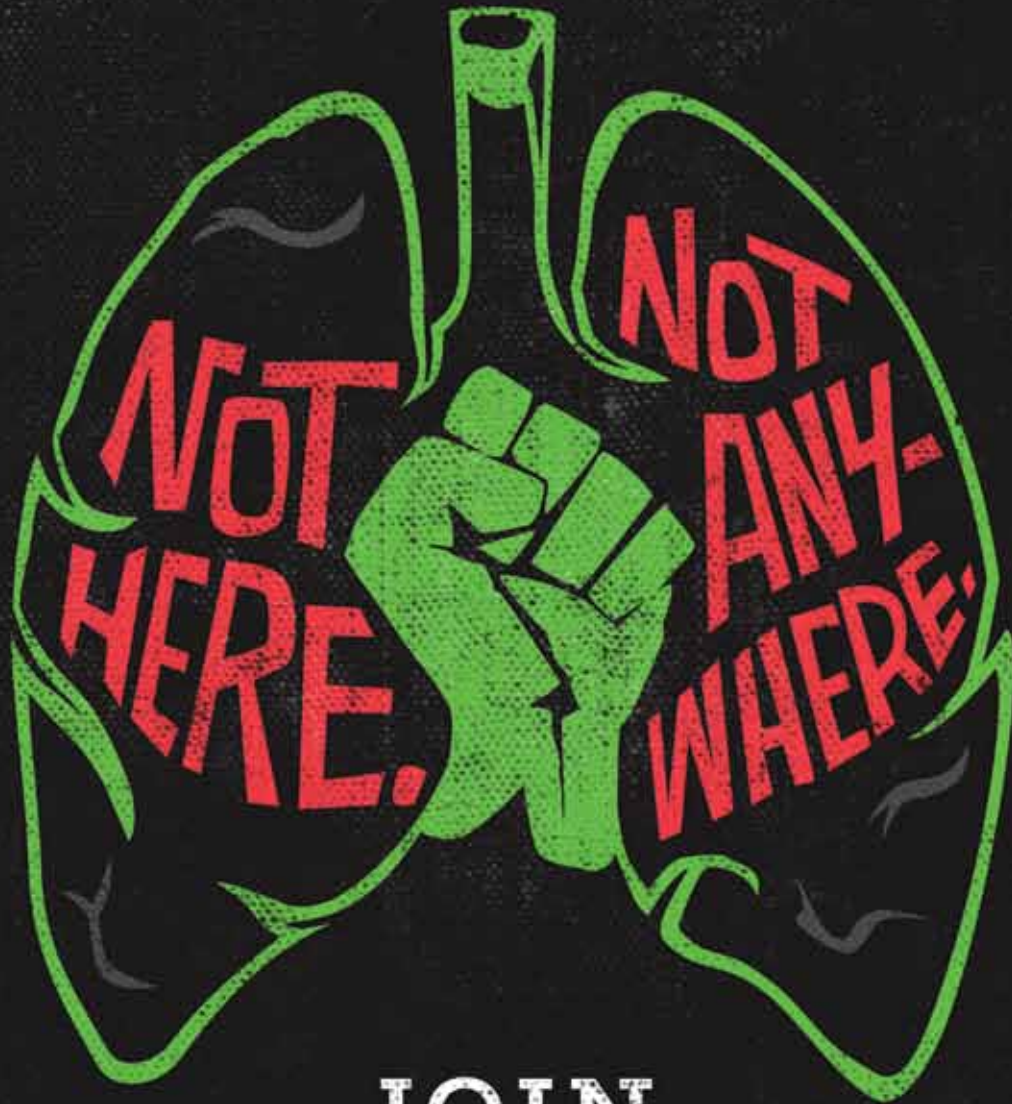
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## WHAT NEXT FOR TAFE?





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# Contents



Cover image: Olivia Brown, AEU Women's Officer and ex TAFE student doing her block.

## features

5 FEDERAL ELECTION :  
THE FIGHT CONTINUES

10 DELIVERING SKILLS FOR  
TODAY AND TOMORROW  
JONATHON GUY

13 SO MUCH FOR  
COMPETENT ECONOMIC  
MANAGEMENT  
JIM STANFORD

16 NATIONAL TAFE DAY  
CELEBRATIONS

18 EMPLOYER INCENTIVES  
MAY NOT BE THE MOST  
COST-EFFECTIVE OR FAIR  
WAY TO BOOST  
APPRENTICESHIPS  
ADJUNCT PROFESSOR  
GERALD BURKE

22 TRADE TAFE FOR HIGH  
SCHOOL  
SARAH GATES

23 LEARNING FROM FINLAND  
PROFESSOR ANDREW SCOTT

27 SUPPORTING STUDENTS  
WITH DISABILITY  
MICHELLE PURDY

## columns

4 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

29 AROUND AUSTRALIA

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# TAFE: TOO GOOD TO LOSE

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### EDITORIAL

All editorial contributions to the attention of  
Susan Hopgood *The Australian TAFE Teacher*,  
Australian Education Union, 120 Clarendon Street,  
Southbank VIC 3006 Tel: (03) 9693 1800  
Fax: (03) 9693 1805  
Email: [shopgood@aeufederal.org.au](mailto:shopgood@aeufederal.org.au)

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(inclusive of GST).  
Contact AEU Federal Office, 120 Clarendon Street,  
Southbank VIC 3006  
Tel: (03) 9693 1800; Fax: (03) 9693 1805  
Email: [aeu@aeufederal.org.au](mailto:aeu@aeufederal.org.au)

### ADVERTISING

Brooke Mott  
Tel: (03) 9693 1800; Fax: (03) 9693 1805  
Email: [bmott@aeufederal.org.au](mailto:bmott@aeufederal.org.au)  
Sub-Editing: Sarah Jones  
*The Australian TAFE Teacher* is produced for the  
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Tel: 0421 379 678. Email: [lyngeiadesign@gmail.com](mailto:lyngeiadesign@gmail.com)

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WA	Gary Hedger

### Federal TAFE office bearers

Federal TAFE President	Michelle Purdy
Federal TAFE Secretary	Maxine Sharkey

AEU WEBSITE: [www.aeufederal.org.au](http://www.aeufederal.org.au)

MICHELLE PURDY, AEU FEDERAL TAFE PRESIDENT



Standing with Anita Dow, State Labor Member for Braddon on election day.

## We can't afford to give up on TAFE

**L**IKE many members, I had high hopes on Election Day as I handed out how to vote cards in my electorate, believing that this election was the best shot we had at restoring TAFE to its former glory.

While we didn't get the result we were hoping for, there is no doubt that community support is growing for TAFE. I was heartened by the conversations I had with voters in the lead up to the election and the fact that lots of them had heard about the Stop TAFE Cuts campaign. It's a real tribute to the hard work of everyone who stepped up and got involved. A huge thank-you to everyone who had conversations and took the time to share your experiences of TAFE and raise awareness of why we need a strong and vibrant TAFE system.

I urge you all not to give up hope now. Our campaign needs to grow and continue until we reach our objectives. Now, it is more critical than ever that we make sure the benefits of TAFE are clear to see.

The unexpected election result means three more years of the Liberal government's

privatisation agenda and deliberate underfunding of TAFE. With the number of TAFEs dwindling from 59 TAFEs in 2012 to just 40 today, it is more important than ever that we ramp up our activity.

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training is certainly ramping up its activity. It's rebranded as the Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia (ITECA) to amplify its demands for fully contestable funding – whereby public TAFEs and private registered training organisations would have to compete against each other for all available government funding.

This could mean that programmes that aren't profitable, but are vital to the local communities, may not get funded. TAFE will lose out while increasing amounts of public money will continue to go directly into the hands of private enterprise and turned into outrageous profits. Too much public money has already been wasted on private-for-profit providers offering courses of untested quality at inflated prices to increase their profits.

As Jim Stanford, Director of the Centre for

Future Work points out in this issue, we need to educate the public that this is not competent economic management. TAFE is too precious to be abandoned to the vagaries of the market.

We face the challenge of convincing the Morrison Government that the public reject this marketisation agenda and want government to commit to a publicly funded TAFE system. One that everybody owns and enables everyone in every community the opportunity to access education. Every day we see students transforming their lives thanks to TAFE and everyone has benefited from the social, cultural and economic benefits that TAFE brings to our society.

We will need to continue to grow our campaign to make sure that our voice is heard. We can only achieve this with more support. Speak to your colleagues and encourage them to join the union and our Stop TAFE cuts campaign. Australia's TAFE system faces a dismal future if we abandon hope now. ●

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# FEDERAL ELECTION

## The fight continues

The election outcome was unexpected, but the disappointing result was not due to lack of commitment from the Stop TAFE Cuts grassroots community of volunteers. As the campaign ramped up for the final weeks, thousands of people knocked on doors, made phone calls into marginal electorates, delivered STOP TAFE Cuts leaflets, lobbied MPs and had important conversations with neighbours and friends to explain the importance of saving TAFE.

The Stop TAFE Cuts campaign manifesto called on the government to:

- Guarantee a minimum 70% of government funding to the public TAFE system.
- Restore funding and rebuild the system
- Abandon the failed student loans experiment
- Re-invest in the TAFE teaching workforce
- Develop a capital investment strategy
- Support a comprehensive independent inquiry into TAFE.

### Effective advocacy

**T**HANKS to persistent campaigning from the AEU and Stop TAFE Cuts supporters, the ALP and the Greens made commitments to uphold most of the key asks of the manifesto.

In a game-changing move for TAFE, the ALP committed to guarantee TAFE at least two thirds of public funding, by working with the states and territories to rebuild the system and reinvest in the teaching workforce.

The ALP committed to providing 150,000 additional apprentice incentives in areas that are experiencing skills shortages to reverse the decline that has been overseen by the Liberal Government. The promised investment of \$200 million to rebuild and re-open TAFE campuses would have created high quality learning facilities commensurate with those enjoyed by university students, but above all, the commitment to a national inquiry into post-secondary education would have ensured that TAFE was fit for the future.

The Greens promised free funding for over a decade, with all government vocational education funding going to TAFE as a first priority.





The **SAY NO TO MORRISON'S TAFE CUTS** mobile billboard was launched on April 6 in Frankston at a huge joint door-knocking effort with the TAFE Executive and the ACTU to raise awareness across the key marginal electorate of Dunkley.



Situated south east of Melbourne, Dunkley was a Liberal seat. At the joint door-knocking event 175 campaigners spoke to local residents around the Chisholm TAFE campus to share their experience and stories of TAFE and why it was critical to change the government to secure TAFE's future. A few weeks later at the election, the seat swung to Labor for the first time in twenty three years.

From Dunkley in April, the mobile billboard travelled around Australia raising awareness of the \$3 billion in cuts to TAFE that occurred on Scott Morrison's watch.





Federal TAFE President, Michelle Purdy on the bus to Frankston

## Spreading the word

**A**CROSS the country, Stop TAFE Cuts supporters were out in force delivering 'STOP Morrison's TAFE Cuts' leaflets. The leaflets explained how the Morrison Government's privatisation agenda is destroying TAFE, pointing out that public money has been wasted on private not-for-profit providers offering courses of untested quality at inflated prices to increase their profits, that apprenticeship numbers have fallen despite skills shortages in some areas and how students are still being loaded up with debt through the VET loan system.

The demand for leaflets from volunteers prepared to 'do their block' and deliver leaflets to their neighbours was so great that an extra print run of leaflets had to be ordered.



QTU president Kevin Bates and Madonna Johanson



AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe and SSTUWA President Pat Byrne hit the streets.



Supporters including Pat Burke and Jen Lau streaming off the bus



Olivia Brown and Brooke Mott



Gary Hedger



Online, users sharing content helped spread the word beyond their neighborhoods. This meme alone gained almost 100,000 views.

## What next for the campaign?

OUR campaign goals remain the same and we will continue to fight for reform to the TAFE sector in line with the AEU TAFE manifesto.

The campaign needs to leverage the commitments that were secured by the ALP and the Greens in the lead up to the last election and the pledges made by MPs and Senators (see p9), and build up public pressure on State and Federal Governments to make investing in TAFE an issue that cannot be ignored.

Please help grow the campaign, by signing up a friend or colleague at [stoptafecuts.com.au](http://stoptafecuts.com.au) to keep the momentum going.



## Act now

There are some easy ways you can get involved and help the Stop TAFE Cuts campaign. Go to <http://stoptafecuts.com.au/act-now> and download resources.

 <p><b>GUARANTEE 70% FUNDING</b></p> <p>Download a guarantee funding poster and ask your local MP to sign it. Take a photo and upload it to our gallery.</p>	 <p><b>BE SOCIAL!</b></p> <p>Join us on Facebook and Twitter. Share, retweet and like to spread the word.</p> 	 <p><b>REQUEST A KIT</b></p> <p>It's the perfect starter kit for getting active.</p>	 <p><b>TAKE A PHOTO</b></p> <p>Download some Stop TAFE Cuts signs and get supporters at your TAFE to be in a photo at your campus. Like supporters at My TAFE <a href="http://stoptafecuts.com.au/my-tafe">stoptafecuts.com.au/my-tafe</a></p>	 <p><b>GET INFORMED</b></p> <p>Check out our resources page for factsheets, leaflets and comment pieces.</p> <p><a href="http://stoptafecuts.com.au/resources">stoptafecuts.com.au/resources</a></p>
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LABOR

MPs & SENATORS

WHO HAVE SIGNED  
**THE 70%  
GUARANTEED  
FUNDING**  
FOR TAFE PLEDGE

GREENS

INDEPENDENT

LIBERAL / NATIONAL

*The Liberal/Nationals have cut \$3 billion from TAFE  
and vocational education in the past six years.*

HAVE YOU ASKED YOUR MP OR SENATOR TO SIGN THE PLEDGE?





# What can TAFE expect from the Federal Government?

The Morrison Government was silent on its policy for TAFE during the election campaign and there was no mention of TAFE in the Federal Budget revealed just prior to the election.

Jonathon Guy, AEU Strategic Research Officer looks at the future for TAFE under a Morrison Government in the light of the Joyce Review.



LABOR took a bold and progressive suite of policies to the election that were designed to reinvigorate TAFE and re-establish it as the central pillar of Australia's vocational education system. They went as far as announcing terms of reference for a proposed thorough review of Australia's vocational education system, which the AEU endorsed.

Their policies aligned very closely with the AEU's TAFE manifesto and, most importantly, included a guarantee that 70% of public funding for vocational education would go to TAFE, 150,000 new apprenticeships would be created and that a total new investment of \$1 billion in TAFE would be made over the next parliamentary term.

However, the re-election of the coalition means that an entirely different vision for vocational education in Australia will now be enacted. In the 2019-20 budget, the government offered some outline of its plans, drawn from a few of the recommendations of the Steven Joyce review, which was published without fanfare the same day that the budget was handed down.

## The Joyce Review and Coalition policy

Joyce made more than seventy recommendations in his report, grouped around what he claims is a six point plan "to deliver a stronger skills sector which is a positive choice for many more Australians, whether they are starting their working lives or need new skills to advance their career." The six points as described in Joyce's proposed plan are:

1. Strengthening quality assurance
2. Speeding up qualification development
3. Simpler funding and skills matching
4. Better careers information
5. Clearer secondary school pathways
6. Greater access for disadvantaged Australians.

The report also suggests a series of 'early actions' that the Commonwealth Government can unilaterally take without the involvement of state and territory governments. These steps, are:

- Bringing forward implementation of reforms to strengthen ASQA and quality assurance in the sector.
- Piloting a new business-led model of Skills Organisations for qualification development, and extending work-based VET further into less traditional areas.
- Establishing a new National Skills Commission to start working with the States and Territories to develop a new

nationally-consistent funding model based on a shared understanding of skills needs.

- Revamping and simplifying apprenticeship incentives to increase their attractiveness to employers and trainees.
- Establishing a new National Careers Institute.
- Creating new vocational pathways for introduction into senior secondary schools.
- Providing new support for second chance learners needing foundation language, literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

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*As Professor Leesa Wheelahan asserts;  
"public vocational education is in danger of being reduced to atomistic, just-in-time and just-for-now, narrow skills training by a fragmented population of private for-profit providers and a residual public TAFE system".*

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It is clear to see that this plan represents a further narrowing of curriculum and qualifications for TAFE and vocational education, the further shrinking of TAFE's presence in Australia's vocational education sector and the further entrenchment of competency based training as the default in vocational education.

## Smoke and mirrors budget package

The first of these actions was unveiled in the 2019-20 budget with the government announcing measures based on the suggestions for a business led Skills Organisation, the establishment of a new National Skills Commission and measures to increase cash incentives for apprentices and those who employ them.

These measures were labelled the

*Delivering Skills for Today and Tomorrow* package, and were trumpeted by the Treasurer as a new \$525 million investment in vocational education.

Unsurprisingly, it didn't take long for this hyperbole to be exposed as nothing but smoke and mirrors. While the Treasurer claimed he was providing half a billion dollars over five years "to upgrade the VET sector" in fact \$417 million of this money was pilfered directly from the *Skilling Australians Fund* despite that fund only being activated less than a year ago, a move described by TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) as "robbing Peter to pay Paul". At the time of the announcement, TDA CEO Craig Robertson said "It beggars belief that the Commonwealth could expect state and territories to sign up to the Joyce vision for a new national skills framework after having pulled the rug from what was promised and funded under the *Skilling Australians Fund*."

Once this money is moved from the *Skilling Australians Fund* to the new *Delivering Skills for Today and Tomorrow* package it actually represents a further cut of over \$80 million to total vocational education funding — this is in addition to the \$270 million the Coalition cut in 2018 and the \$3 billion in total they have cut since coming to office in 2013.

## Vague promises on apprenticeships

On budget night the Treasurer boasted that *Delivering Skills for Today and Tomorrow* will double employer incentives and lead to the recruitment of 80,000 new apprentices, but this is only slightly more than half of the 140,000 apprenticeships Australia has lost in the last six years, and just a quarter of the total of 300,000 the government was promising to deliver as recently as mid 2018 when they launched the now greatly diminished *Skilling Australians Fund*.

## Free reign for business to devalue vocational education

Instead of reigning in private providers and rectifying the incalculable damage they have inflicted on the sector in recent years, the government announced plans to hand over what remains by establishing 'National Skills Organisations' to provide 'modern and flexible alternatives to classroom based learning' and to 'enhance the role of industry in designing training courses by establishing a national skills commission'.

All of this can be seen as euphuisms for ramping up their drive to entirely privatise vocational education and to devalue qualifications to fulfill only the narrow and specific needs of individual employers, an approach that often provides little to no long term benefit for those subject to it.

The industry led 'Skills Organisations' as proposed by Joyce and announced in the federal budget signal a further narrowing of qualifications and represents the further entrenchment of a strict competency based training system, the next stage in the decades long process of governments handing control of the design of course content and delivery to industry, an approach entirely at odds with the capability based system that academics experts agree is the most beneficial and sustainable.

As Professor Leesa Wheelahan asserts;

"public vocational education is in danger of being reduced to atomistic, just-in-time and just-for-now, narrow skills training by a fragmented population of private for-profit providers and a residual public TAFE system<sup>1</sup>".

The Joyce Review and the Coalitions' priorities for vocational education as revealed in the budget do nothing to assuage that danger.

### What now for TAFE?

The most telling aspect of the Coalitions' approach to TAFE is that there was not one single specific mention of TAFE anywhere in the thousands of pages of budget papers — the Morrison government just isn't going to address the 25% fall in TAFE enrolments that occurred on their watch or even acknowledge the existence of TAFE anywhere in the budget, let alone do

anything to resolve the crisis.

Details beyond the budget announcements are scant and TAFE and vocational education barely rated a mention during the Coalitions' election campaign. Since the election there has been no indication from the Morrison government of whether they plan to implement further recommendations from the Joyce review beyond what has already been announced, or how they plan to address the ongoing crisis in Australia's TAFE and vocational education system.

What we do know is that the measures announced in the budget signal an intensification of the deliberate undermining of TAFE as the primary institution for vocational education in Australia. ●

<sup>1</sup> Wheelahan, L, Moodie, G, Lavigne, E & Samji, F, *Case Study of TAFE and public vocational education in Australia: Preliminary Report*, Educational International, 2018, p5.







# So much for competent economic management

Australia has been through another hard-fought federal election, in which public debate focused predictably on which party are the “best economic managers.”

BY JIM STANFORD

**O**F COURSE, the economy is very important. And government is important to the economy. But the underlying assumption that elected politicians “manage” the economy, and actually *create* all the jobs, is very odd.

After all, Australia is primarily a market economy. About 85% of all our output of goods and services — our GDP — is produced by private businesses.

Only about 15% is produced by government itself ... and government-funded agencies (like schools, TAFEs, and hospitals). That 15% is very important. We need more of those public services. They are growing. They’re crucial to our quality of life. And they’ve created hundreds of thousands of new jobs in recent years.

But that’s not what commentators usually mean when they evaluate political parties ability to “manage the economy.” Usually, they want government to spend *less* on public services: to be disciplined, to be tight-fisted, to wrestle the deficit to the ground.

## The Coalition’s vision of “Economic Management”

It’s particularly incongruous when conservative politicians, like those leading the Coalition, boast about being good economic managers. Because most of the time, they say the economy *shouldn’t* be managed. Rather, in their view, it should be left to private businesses, and so-called “market forces”, to determine what happens. Government shouldn’t try to manage: it should just get out of the way.

After all, that’s the philosophy idea behind privatisation. Deregulation. Free trade agreements. Cutting “red tape.” The common idea is that government should keep its hands away

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*“Union activists and other progressive campaigners need to start now to inoculate ourselves, and all voters, against this misleading and manipulative economic jargon in the future.”*

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from the levers of the economy. Because the private sector knows best.

That mindset, by the way, is what produced our current electricity system. Privatised Joblink services in perpetual chaos. Rivers with no water. False robo-debt claims mailed to tens of thousands of Centrelink clients. And more. That’s the private sector in action.

Sadly, there is no better example of the irrationality and waste of private sector management than Australia’s vocational education system, which has been decimated by years of profit-driven rorts, scams, and outright corruption. The decision to hand over vocational training to dodgy fly-by-night private colleges, subsidised with enormous sums of public money, has left Australia’s once-vaunted VET system in tatters. Yet since this was part of government downsizing, conservatives still see this as some kind of “achievement.”

So when market-oriented politicians boast about how they manage the economy, and how many jobs they “created”, what did they actually *do*? Did they just get out of the way? Or did they actually do something?

## Is Australia’s economy strong ... or weak?

Set aside for now that philosophical question of whether governments — especially conservative governments — actually manage the economy. Let’s now review how well Australia’s economy has actually been performing.

The current government boasts that it created over a million jobs over the past five years. But in fact, the only jobs the Commonwealth government itself creates are those in the federal public service. And there were 10,000 *fewer* of those in 2018 than five years earlier. Budget cuts and outsourcing reduced the number of federal public servants, despite Australia’s growing population and growing demands for service. By that measure, the Commonwealth government didn’t create jobs at all: it eliminated them.

Yet even as it downsized its own staff, the government took credit for “creating” all the other jobs in the economy. And there were indeed 1.1 million net new jobs created between 2013 and 2018. Is that impressive? Not compared to the number of people who need those jobs.

There are over 20 million Australians of working age. And our population is growing quickly: by 1.75% per year over the last five years. During that time the working age population expanded by over 1.5 million — much more than the 1.1 million new jobs. So Australia actually needs to create at least a million jobs *every* five years, just to keep up with population, and prevent unemployment from rising. That’s a normal state of affairs — not some extraordinary triumph.

Focusing on the number of jobs misses an important issue: what *kind* of jobs were created? In fact, the quality of work (as opposed to the quantity) has been deteriorating steadily. Almost half the new jobs created over the past five

years were part-time. As a result, today almost one-third of employed Australians work part-time — and many want more hours.

Other indicators of job quality have also gone downhill. Casual work has grown, as have temporary and labour-hire jobs. The number of people holding multiple jobs has reached a record. Centre for Future Work research has shown that insecure and precarious work is now so common in Australia, that less than half of employed Australians now hold a “traditional” job: full-time, permanent employment with normal entitlements (like sick pay and superannuation).

## The crisis in wages

Wages are another crucial indicator of prosperity — and on that score, things have definitely gotten worse. In fact,

since 2013 wage growth has fallen to the slowest sustained pace since the end of the Second World War, growing just 2% per year on average — about half as fast as usual.

Of course, it's not just wages that go up. Prices go up, too. And wages have barely kept pace. That means real wages — that is, wages relative to consumer prices — have hardly changed at all. That's a big change from previous periods, when Australian real wages increased quite steadily.

Since 2013, under the Coalition's “competent economic management,” real weekly wages have been essentially frozen (see Figure 1). That compares to steady increases in real wages of 1.5% per year under the Rudd-Gillard government, and 1.3% per year under John Howard.

Does the Coalition's “economic

management” explain the weakness of wage growth over the last few years? Well, to a large extent it does. Because even though government doesn't truly manage the economy, and doesn't truly create jobs (other than jobs in government itself), it *does* set the rules under which wages are determined.

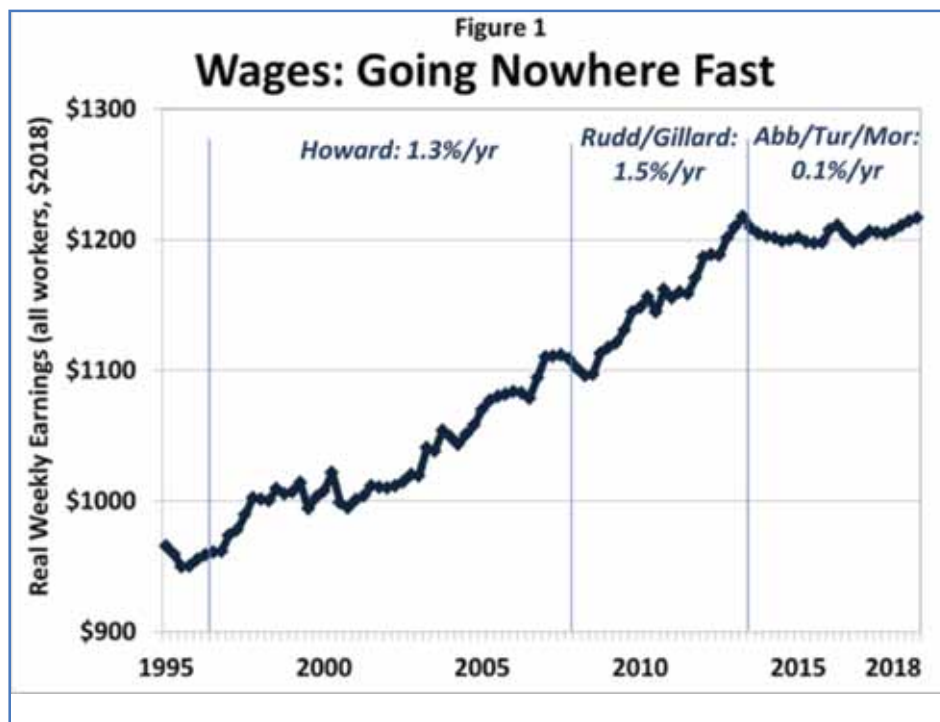
And several of the government's policy measures have clearly contributed to wage suppression. These include a strict cap on wage gains for public sector workers, continued attacks on unions, endorsement of lower penalty rates for Sunday and holiday work, and others.

## Macroeconomic storm clouds ahead

Many indicators suggest Australia's economy is now heading into a very rough patch. Economic growth has slowed dramatically. Over the 12 months ending in the March quarter, the economy expanded by just 1.8 percent — the worst since 2009 (at the peak of the Global Financial Crisis). In per person terms, living standards are falling.

Very weak consumer spending is one key factor in the slowdown. Consumer spending makes up half of total GDP. And now we've got the slowest growth in spending in six years — largely due to weak wages.

Another big problem has been weak investment. In theory, if the economy was truly managing itself (as conservatives believe), private business investment would be strong. But the last six years have been the worst for business investment since World War Two, despite a supposedly business-friendly government holding sway in Canberra. As illustrated in Figure 2, business capital spending has declined by one-third as a share of GDP



SOURCE: CENTRE FOR FUTURE WORK FROM ABS DATA.





since 2013 – and it's not getting any better.

All in all, Australia's economy is in pretty rough shape. That's not solely because of the federal government. But it certainly played a role.

## The RBA's judgment

Accumulating evidence of a looming slowdown explains why, just two weeks after the election, the Reserve Bank of Australia cut its interest rates – to just 1.25% (the lowest level in history). And financial analysts are now unanimous that there will be at least one, and possibly two, more interest rate cuts this year, given the bad economic outlook.

The RBA should have cut rates before the

election. But they didn't – likely fearing the political controversy that would have ensued. Just imagine: if the economy was really being so "well-managed," why would the RBA have to cut interest rates during an election campaign?

Unfortunately, cutting interest rates won't do much to address the problem. The impact on consumers will be modest, because they are already carrying record debt. Personal debt in Australia now equals 200% of personal disposable income – the highest in history, and one of the worst in the world. So slightly lower interest rates cannot spur significant new spending: it's like pushing on a string. If we really want to get the economy going again, we need a more direct and powerful boost to

jobs and incomes: through expanded public services, big infrastructure investments, and higher wages.

## Learning the lessons

The contrast between the self-proclaimed economic expertise of the Coalition, and the rapidly deteriorating economic reality faced by Australian workers, has rarely been clearer. The Coalition based its re-election campaign on unjustified boasts about the health of Australia's economy under its stewardship – and a false but effective scare campaign that it would fall apart under Labor.

Union activists and other progressive campaigners need to start now to inoculate ourselves, and all voters, against this misleading and manipulative economic jargon in the future. That will require educating members and co-workers about how to truly judge whether the economy is working well or not: namely, by whether real Australians have access to decent work, healthy wages, secure jobs, and generous public services.

Conservatives don't deserve their reputation as "good economic managers." Tough times are now coming in Australia's economy – and the resulting hardship will be a painful reminder that we need a new approach. Let's make sure Australians learn the right lessons from the Coalition's betrayed promises, so we can build support for a better, more inclusive and sustainable economy in the future. ●

*Jim Stanford is Economist and Director of the Centre for Future Work at the Australia Institute, [www.futurework.org.au](http://www.futurework.org.au). A video presentation covering themes in this article is available at <https://youtu.be/Vbn3WriH-oU>.*



SOURCE: CENTRE FOR FUTURE WORK FROM ABS DATA.

# NATIONAL TAFE DAY

Bittersweet celebrations were held all over Australia for National TAFE Day on Thursday 14 November. The day was a call to action to the Morrison Government the urgent need to 'STOP TAFE Cuts' and restore this



**T**ANYA Plibersek and new shadow Assistant Minister, Graham Perret, MP spent the day at Mount Gravatt TAFE thanking staff, meeting students and celebrating the contribution that TAFE makes to employability in Australia. 'We know that TAFE and jobs go hand in hand' said Plibersek.

Yet Australia's TAFE system faces a dismal future if the years of neglect and underfunding by federal Coalition governments continues under the Morrison Government.

Australian Education Union (AEU) Deputy Federal President Maurie Mulheron said the entire TAFE system is at risk unless radical action is taken to restore funding and confidence in the system.

"TAFE has served faithfully for decades, providing world-leading vocational education for millions of Australian skilled workers. However, under the Morrison Government the very future of TAFE itself is under threat," Mr Mulheron said.

"Despite the clear and undisputed benefits that a robustly funded and administered public TAFE sector provides our economy and our society, there has been a concerted and continual drive from successive Coalition governments to marginalise vocational education and deprioritise TAFE."

"The almost complete surrender by the Morrison Government of the provision of vocational education to market forces has resulted in a massive decline of vocational education in Australia," Mr Mulheron said.

"There was not a single mention of TAFE in the Morrison Government's first Budget, while the recent Joyce Review of vocational education was clear in its aims of deprioritising TAFE as a keystone of the vocational education sector in Australia."



# CELEBRATIONS

Monday 13 June. It was a day to celebrate our public TAFE system, but also to showcase our world-leading system to the heart of vocational education.



In 2009 TAFE institutions taught 81% of all publicly-funded full-time-equivalent students in Australia. Five years later, this figure had reduced to 57%. Over the same period, private for-profit providers increased their share of publicly-funded full-time-equivalent students from 15% to 40% and increased their total student numbers by 286%.

"According to new research, in 2016 there were over 4600 active registered training providers, but only 96 of those providers have more than 100 full time students," Mr Mulheron said.

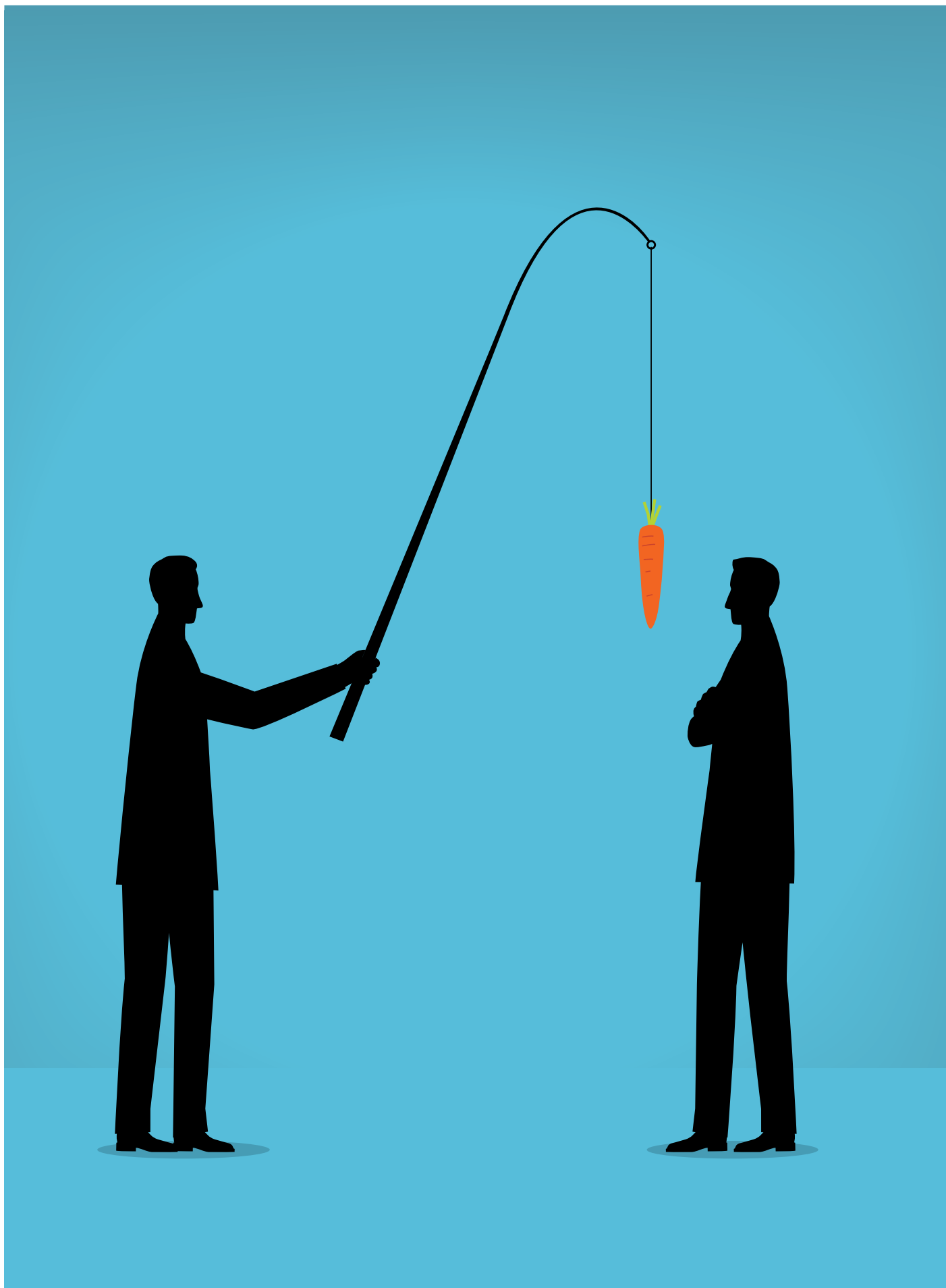
"It is plainly evident that quality cannot be consistently maintained at a system level when that system is populated by thousands of tiny individual private providers, some of whom have participated in recruitment and enrolment practices that have been described as 'skirting the edge of legality'."

"The continued attempts by successive state, territory and federal governments to shift this sector towards privatisation have severely eroded the viability of many public TAFE institutions and undermined public confidence in the system," Mr Mulheron said.

"TAFE is the bedrock of Australia's vocational education system and TAFE institutions have a history of providing high quality technical, further and general education at a level of quality or consistency that the relatively recently conceived private vocational education sector has been unable to match," Mr Mulheron said.

"The Morrison Government must immediately pledge support to restore TAFE to the heart of vocational education in Australia. Anything less than this risks losing an educational gem which is the envy of the rest of the world." ●







# Employer incentives may not be the most cost-effective or fair way of boosting apprenticeship numbers

The Coalition promised to create 80,000 new apprenticeships in areas of skills shortages. Most skilled trades (such as motor mechanics, panel beaters, carpenters, automotive electricians, plumbers, hairdressers) have recently been in shortage.

ADJUNCT PROFESSOR GERALD BURKE

**T**HE Coalition aims to reduce the shortages through doubling employer incentive payments, making cash payments to apprentices and creating training hubs in regional areas and other areas of need.

Labor said it would pay upfront fees for 100,000 TAFE places. Labor also said it would provide incentives for employers and apprentices for an additional 150,000 apprentices.

It's clear trade apprentices and associated skills shortages are a central concern of both parties. But it's not clear providing incentives is the best way to handle the issue, as history shows government incentives to employers have made little difference to the (mostly male) trade apprenticeship numbers.

## Difference between apprentice and trainee

In considering the policies of both parties, it's important to understand the differences between longer-term trade apprenticeships and shorter-term traineeships.

An apprentice, in the narrow use of the word, is contracted in a trade such as that of an electrician, carpenter, chef or hairdresser. An apprenticeship can take up to four years to complete. Trade apprentices make up a small proportion of the vocational education and training sector – around 14% of all government funded vocational students.

Many of the main trades frequently appear on the skills shortage list. Shortages are seen

to inhibit productivity in industries and the broader economy.

Traineeships were established in the late 1980s to provide apprentice-type training for young people in non-trade occupations such as sales and clerical, and many of the care occupations including disability and aged care.

The aim was to provide options, particularly for early school leavers, which combine work experience and learning on the job. It was hoped this would enhance early school leavers' job prospects and add to the stock of skills in the economy.

Traineeships usually take one to two years to complete, much shorter than trade apprenticeships.



## History of incentives

From the 1970s, the federal government had been providing financial incentives to employers of trade apprentices. The states also provided assistance. From the mid-1990s the federal government extended incentives to trainees, existing workers and to part-time and older workers.

Together with the introduction of a low training wage for trainees, the incentives led to a rapid expansion in the numbers of trainees in the late 1990s and to new training modes including fully on-the-job training. There was a sharp increase in the number of training organisations as employers were allowed to choose a private or public provider for off-the-job training (often one day a week).

A 1999 review into the system found some firms were using traineeships as a source of wage subsidies and, in many instances, provided little training to the trainees. For some, the skills acquired were not valued by employers over general work experience obtained during the traineeship. And the issue continued into the next decade.

In 2011, an expert panel noted Australia was the only country that paid government incentives, on a large scale, to employers of apprentices and trainees. The panel reported research that



showed incentives paid to employers for the shorter traineeships represented a significant part of the wage costs (in some cases about 20%) and contributed to the large increase in trainee numbers.

For the longer, and more costly, training of trade apprentices, government payments to employers represented a much smaller proportion of the wage and training costs. And so, the incentives had only a marginal effect on the numbers of trade apprentices employed.

The expert panel suggested the government would be better to confine its payments to programs that added value to the economy, such as those in community services, health and information technology.

The panel also recommended the government not give funds directly as incentives to employers. Instead, both employers and government would pay into an employer contribution scheme. Employers who met benchmarks such as a strong induction process and effective





mentoring would have their contribution rebated, either in part or in full.

These recommendations were particularly aimed at the non-completion rates of apprentices — on average less than half complete their apprenticeships with their first employer. The most common reason given is dissatisfaction with the employment experience including difficulties with employers or colleagues.

## Drop in trainee numbers

The government at the time didn't take up the recommendation of an employer contribution scheme. It retained incentives for apprenticeships in trades on the national skills needs list such as construction and telecommunications, and for traineeships in priority occupations in aged care, childcare, disability care and nursing.

It abolished incentives for existing workers in other traineeships. Together with cuts in state subsidies to the providers of off-the-job training in some courses, these changes led to a large fall in traineeship numbers.

For example, by 2018, traineeships in clerical and sales had fallen by more than 70% from 2012. Older and female workers were most affected.

But the numbers of starting apprenticeships in trades in the last ten years in the largest three

groups — construction trades, automotive and engineering, and electrotechnology and telecommunications — is virtually unchanged. And a fall in automotive was offset by increases in the others.

These results were largely in keeping with intentions of the expert panel in 2011.

## A male dominated industry

Trade apprenticeships are male dominated. In 2018, 65,000 males started trade apprenticeships compared to 9,000 females. And females bore the larger share of the reduction in traineeships since 2012. It seems unlikely many of the women who missed out on traineeships are among the entrants to higher education where women form the majority of undergraduates.

The available research shows electrotechnology and telecommunications trades and construction trades graduates are relatively well paid, while hairdressers are the worst paid.

Trade apprentices are already the best-supported VET students during training. They can access trade support loans of up to \$20,000 over four years — with a 20% discount of the debt on completion. Apprentices can receive allowances for living away from home, and the government provides support for adult appren-

tices as well as rural and regional skills shortage incentives.

Employment of apprentices and their mentoring is assisted by the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network, at an annual cost of nearly A\$200 million.

State governments also provide additional support for employers and apprentices. For instance, Queensland has a program including schemes aimed at the unemployed. Western Australia has announced the provision of employer incentives in its 2019 budget. NSW has abolished tuition fees for apprenticeships.

Extra government incentives to improve apprenticeship numbers do not seem to be the most effective, or equitable, policy. The government must undertake a comprehensive review of incentives and all other forms of apprenticeship assistance.

The review should revisit the advice of the 2011 expert panel and ideally, should be conducted in the context of a review all tertiary funding (similar to what Labor is proposed).

*Gerald Burke is Adjunct Professor, Education, Monash University*

*This article was originally published on The Conversation.*



# Trade TAFE for high school

Australia's schools are experiencing a critical shortage of trades, design and technology teachers.

SARAH GATES - LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

SECONDARY schools around Victoria and Australia are struggling to recruit and hold staff qualified to teach a range of Vocational Education and Training (VET) certificates for senior students. Trades, design and technologies subjects the hardest hit. 'It's beyond breaking point,' reports Raffaella Galati-Brown OAM, Principal of Northern College of the Arts and Technology (NCAT).

When you think of jobs of the future, you might imagine drone traffic optimisers or genetic modification designers. But tomorrow's generations will still need people who can make and fix things: plumbers, mechanics, carpenters, electricians and engineers. Those driverless cars will need maintenance and drone docking stations will need to be built.

VET in Schools (VETiS) plays an important role in preparing Year 11 and 12 students for the transition to the workforce or further study and provides a pathway for hands-on learners who might otherwise reject school. These programs allow senior students to gain credit towards their VCE and ATAR, or towards their VCAL, familiarise themselves with trades and technical jobs and workplaces, and obtain a qualification at the Certificate II or III (in non-trades areas) level to kickstart their progress towards an apprenticeship or further study.

For an economy facing a shortage of tradespeople, the

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*"Because TAFE teachers already have a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment they are ideally placed to step into LaTrobe's degree."*

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VETiS program leads to a valuable increase in completion of apprenticeships. In a recent four-year review, NCAT found that over 80% of its students who go from VETiS to an apprenticeship finish their training, compared to the national average of around 50%.

Specialist and non-specialist schools are willing to invest in trades, design and technologies, especially with the rise of STEM. NCAT has invested \$12 million in a trades training centre and another \$5 million in technology and equipment. But what use is state-of-the-art education infrastructure with no one to teach in it?

There has been an explosion of VETiS since 2000, but no accompanying recruitment and education for specialised teachers. There are simply not enough trades, design and technologies qualified teachers to fill current vacancies, which threatens the existence of these programs and could put teachers and students at risk – certainly in the case of non-specialist teachers being asked to demonstrate or supervise the use of complex and dangerous equipment.

While principals and groups like the Design and Technology Teachers' Association (DATTA) lobby the government for added support for training, La Trobe University has designed the Bachelor of Technology Education to help mature age students from a trades or other technology background take their years of





experience and expertise into the classroom.

Catered to experienced adults currently working in trades or technology, The Bachelor of Technology Education degree is different from your average education qualification. Prior work experience is recognised and classes are held on weekends, meaning that students can hold down their existing jobs while studying towards a teaching career. Graduates are equipped to teach Years 7-12 design and technology.

Many students enrolled in the La Trobe degree are already working as TAFE teachers – and they have an added advantage. Because VET teachers already have a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, they are ideally placed to step into La Trobe's degree and into VET programs in specialist and non-specialist schools.

This course provides another career avenue for TAFE teachers. Teachers can become managers, principals, consultants and policy advisors. Last year, a former VET carpentry and landscaping teacher at NCAT, who moved from industry to teaching, became principal of a secondary college.

Forty-three-year-old Jeannette Valencia found a pathway back to school with La Trobe's Bachelor of Technology Education. Over her career, she has been a chef, cook, kitchen manager and, for the past 11 years, a TAFE teacher.

She has been able to fit study around her current work schedule. Now in her third year part-time, graduation is in sight and Ms Valencia is glad she made the leap.

Teaching young people is incredibly rewarding. Design, trades and technologies and VET in Schools teachers can be a positive driving force in young people's lives when it really matters. VETiS is an exciting and valuable option for many secondary students, and they need the right teachers to mentor them.

Australian trades and technical sectors need young people to develop vital industry expertise into the future and, to do this, we need suitably qualified and talented teachers right now. ●



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# Learning from Finland: lessons for Australia's vocational higher education future

By 2023 Australia will need more workers qualified with a trade certificates than university degrees, yet still the government won't commit to funding TAFE.

ANDREW SCOTT - PROFESSOR OF POLITICS AND POLICY AT DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

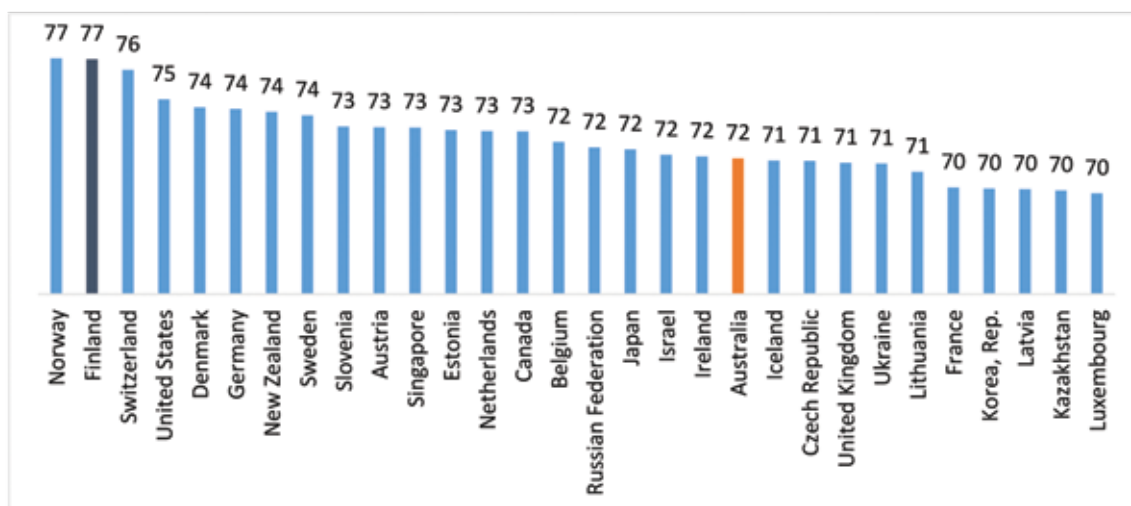
**T**HE Finnish approach to education recognises that many young people have vocational aptitudes that are not best fostered in a standard academic environment.

Those young people's attentions are engaged, and their enthusiasm aroused, by teaching methods different from those drawn from a tradition of book learning. Very many of those young people are highly intelligent in questioning the nature of practical mechanical and electronic phenomena: such as how car motors work. Their curiosity to find the answers to those questions can lead them on a journey of discovery, during which they come

to acquire general skills and to understand abstract mathematical principles.

Australia can learn from Finland's attainment of excellence with equity in its post-school educational institutions. This is in addition to the equitable and respected vocational learning opportunities provided in Finland's secondary schools.<sup>5</sup> The World Economic Forum's report on 'human capital' and preparation of people for the future of work ranks Finland at number 2 in the world, behind only Norway, whereas Australia is at number 20, as shown in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Human Capital Index score, top 30 countries



Source: : World Economic Forum (2017) The Global Human Capital Report 2017: Preparing People for the Future of Work, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-human-capital-report-2017/dataexplorer/>

The same source shows that both countries have a high 'tertiary education enrolment rate': 87.3% in Finland and 90.3% in Australia; but whereas Finland's 'vocational enrolment rate' is 71.3% (number six in the world), Australia's vocational enrolment rate is only 50.5% (number 22 in the world). Finland also spends 7.2% of GDP on education, compared with 5.2% in Australia.

There needs to be more affordable access in 21st Century Australia to a range of quality higher education experiences which best suit the talents and interests of young people. We do not, at present, properly recognise and resource vocational pathways. We need to achieve a better balance

between 'vocational' — and 'academic' — learning. We have still to break free from the prejudice in many English-speaking countries against 'vocational' education as being somehow culturally inferior to 'academic' learning. The current costs of higher education in Australia are also prohibitive for many young people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. More support, including through careers advice, needs to be provided for young people who are suited to work in a skilled trade to pursue that pathway. Practical, incremental steps can be taken to provide that support which are informed by relevant overseas experience. Crucial first steps include restoring proper public funding of TAFE institutes in Australia.



## Rebuilding public TAFEs

TAFE institutes need now to be placed on a more equal footing with universities to create a more coherent, less fragmented post-school education sector. While these two types of institutions should continue to play different roles – i.e. TAFEs to specialise in skills, and universities in research – there needs to be less status divisions, and greater co-operation, between them. TAFE institutes are the places in Australia in which mature-age workers can develop new skills after they leave one type of job to enter a different type of job. Those transitions range from retraining former retail workers to fill skill shortages of midwives, to adding to plumbers' expertise so that they can take up expanding job opportunities in renewable energy.

The hybrid status of the 'dual sector' Australian universities complicates comparisons between Finland's universities and polytechnics on the one hand, and Australia's universities and TAFE institutes on the other hand.

Nevertheless, the broad trends are very clear. Since the 1990s there has been a publicly funded further expansion of Finland's polytechnics, now known as universities of applied science (UAS). By contrast, their closest equivalents in Australia – the TAFE institutes – have, in the same period, had their funding and enrolments reduced, and their programs undermined, by the rise of poor-quality privatised providers. It is startling to read how in Australia "in 1996, 98 per cent of students receiving publicly funded VET [Vocational Education and Training] were in TAFE (83 per cent) or not-for-profit community education providers (15 per cent), but by 2016 this had fallen to 49 per cent and six per cent respectively".<sup>6</sup>

Another startling fact is that, since 2008, which was the year in which the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) decided to give private providers greater access to public funding, "publicly funded training hours in vocational education... in Australia... declined by almost 26% for TAFE... while they rose by 199% in private providers".<sup>7</sup> Experts who have advised governments on both sides of Australian politics, meanwhile, warn that "VET participation levels... [have undergone] a significant decline since 2012", particularly among 15 to 24-year-olds. They argue that there is now an "urgent priority" for "governments... to act quickly and decisively to arrest the continuing decline in public investment in VET... and associated cost shifting to students".<sup>8</sup>

An over-emphasis in Australia on academic university courses as the only desirable post-secondary education option has contributed to the downgrading of TAFE. It has also pushed many young people away from learning the vocational skills to which they are best suited. These trends run contrary to Federal government departmental projections of employment growth for the five years to 2023 which indicate that more jobs in that year will require Certificates II, III or IV, particularly the Certificate III awarded by TAFE institutes to tradespeople, than will require a bachelor degree or higher university qualification.<sup>9</sup>

## Different but equal

Finland's post-school education system is different to Australia's, as illustrated in the diagram below. Finnish researchers say the country has 14 universities concentrating on basic research and education and 23 Universities of Applied Sciences focused on higher vocational learning and 'R&D' or applied research. There is a continuing binary diversity "between the university sector and the universities of applied sciences... the former polytechnics" in Finland, but in a less competitive and stratified way than other countries which also have high participation in post-school learning.<sup>10</sup>

Figure 2: Education system in Finland

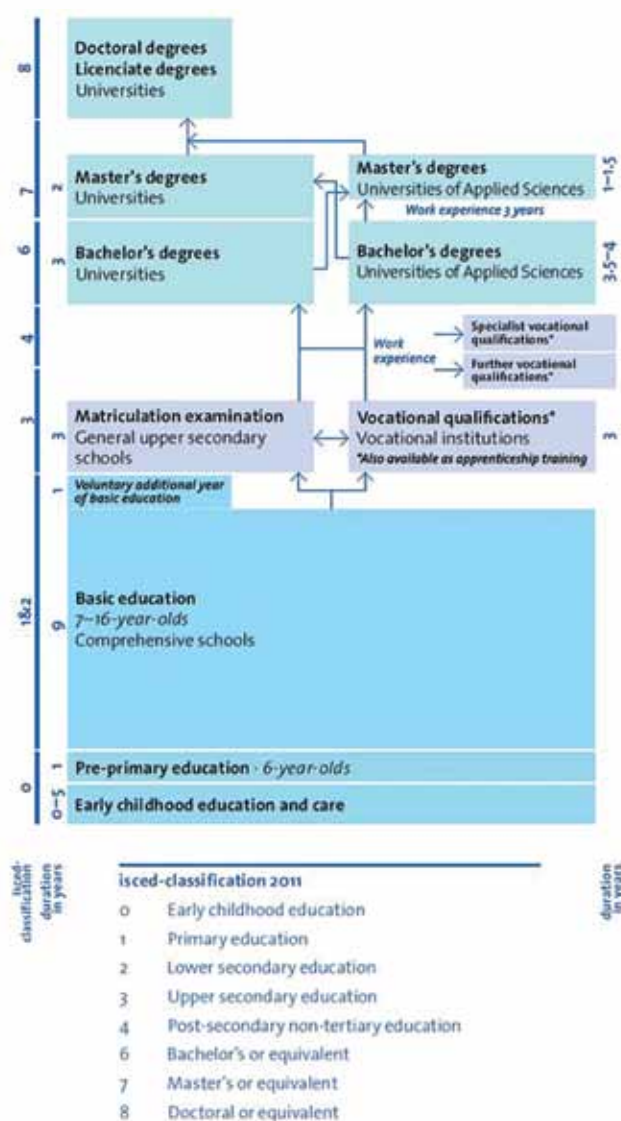


Figure 2 shows that there can be two-way movements between Finnish 'academic' universities and UASs, from bachelor degrees in one type of institution to masters degrees in the other type of institution. In Finland, "in principle and in practice UAS and universities are 'different, but equal'... It is possible to make a mixed career in universities and UAS especially in fields that are found in both sectors such as business, engineering, ICT, social work, music, and visual arts, or in management positions".

Further, “in... higher education, the role of trust... apparent in Nordic ideas of evaluation, especially in Finland... [can be seen in the] aim to use evaluation as an instrument of enhancement rather than an instrument of control and differentiation through the use of league tables”. This approach to evaluation is well-known in Finnish secondary schools and it is similarly important in post-secondary education. “Finnish governments emphasise the specific missions of each sector, steering horizontal differentiation (diversity) between them, rather than a status hierarchy... the key to [this]... is the low intensity of competition between higher education institutions... [and] emphasis placed on cooperation... and parity of esteem between

institutions.”<sup>11</sup>

Further, “the state follows the principle of ‘equal but different’ by producing both a skilled vocational labour force and a high-quality academic labour force. Together with the policy principle of life-long learning this is seen to serve better the needs of knowledge-based society than a single system of higher education based on vertical stratification of institutions”. The “potential for the ‘academic drift’ of polytechnics and the ‘vocational drift’ of universities was discussed in the 1990s when the UAS sector was established... However, during the 20 years of the existence of the UAS the dividing line between universities and UAS has remained clear and accepted by both sectors”.

Finland’s universities of applied science closely cooperate with workplaces and as part of regional development policies. They operate “very much like the *Fachhochschule* in Germany”. Also, “in Finland... distinctions are not so clearly connected to institutional status because unlike the situation in the United States where graduation from an Ivy League university is in itself a sufficient passport to the elite echelons of the labour market, in Finland differential jobs and salaries derive not from institutional reputation but mostly from the differences between disciplines and professions... [hence] institutional ‘brand’ plays a comparatively limited role in shaping socially stratified outcomes”.<sup>12</sup>

## Does Australia want to be more Nordic or more American?

Australian expert Simon Marginson argues that the developed world can now choose between one of two approaches to higher education: one is Nordic, the other is American. “One is primarily social and egalitarian, the other primarily individual and meritocratic.” He shows that the American approach “works... well... for the minority who are successful, but... it works less well than does the Nordic... [approach] for the majority of people”. Marginson explains how “the Nordic countries in Europe are the most developed example” of countries which “have configured their higher education systems on a common good basis”. Public institutions are central to this. The question for Australia is “what is the prevailing balance” between the American and Nordic approaches — and “in which direction [is] that balance... moving”. He argues that “the way forward is... to lift the quality of... higher education, as in the Nordic world, so that inherited privilege becomes less socially decisive in education itself”.<sup>13</sup>

Marginson highlights how “in Nordic societies, unlike the United States or the United Kingdom, ... higher education tend[s] to enhance social equality and mobility”. He compares “the odds of enrolling in higher education for two groups of 20-34-year-olds... those with at least one parent who attended tertiary education, and those neither of whose parents attended. On this measure, intergenerational mobility is... high in the Nordic world and low in the United States”, with “Americans from

tertiary-educated families... 6.8 times as likely to enter tertiary education compared to those from non-tertiary families, similar to the figure for England (6.3)”.<sup>14</sup>

The data on which Marginson draws shows that, in Australia, meanwhile, people with a tertiary-educated parent or parents are 4.3 times as likely to enter tertiary education than are people without a tertiary-educated parent. In Finland, by contrast, they are only 1.4 times as likely.<sup>15</sup> Finland has thus achieved remarkable upward educational mobility for people from less privileged family backgrounds. Australia can clearly learn from this to further realise the full talents of our people on a basis of ability — rather than on a basis of inherited advantage. To reclaim “the way to higher education as common good” which “Anglo-American society has lost”, Australia, according to Marginson, needs to reduce its “steep hierarchy” of higher education institutions so

that all qualifications are valued, as they are in Nordic nations. While, in Nordic countries, “there are mission distinctions between research-oriented universities and universities of applied sciences, ... differences in resources are slight and status differentials are moderate”. Therefore “the Nordic countries show... that it is possible to sustain both... high-quality, research-intensive” universities and other effective institutions.<sup>16</sup> This should now be our goal in Australia.

This is an extract from the briefing note ‘Degrees North’ Vocational and University Education in Australia and Nordic countries’ which was published by the Australia Institute and circulated ahead of The Nordic Policy Centre’s roundtable discussion on building an equitable vocational pathway in Australia.

AEU President Correna Haythorpe and new Federal TAFE Secretary Maxine Sharkey attended the roundtable.

<sup>5</sup> See Pasi Sahlberg, *Finnish Lessons: What Can the World Learn from Educational Change in Finland?*, Teachers College Press, Columbia University, New York, 2011, pp. 27-30; and Stephen Lamb, ‘Successful Provision of VET in Schools: Overseas Approaches’, *VOCAL: The Australian Journal of Vocational Education and Training in School*, Vol. 7, 2008-2009, pp. 117-121

<sup>6</sup> Phillip Toner, ‘A Tale of Mandarins and Lemons: Creating the Market for Vocational Education and Training’, in Damien Cahill and Phillip Toner (eds), *Wrong Way: How Privatisation and Economic Reform Backfired*, La Trobe University Press in conjunction with Black Inc., Melbourne, 2018, p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> Lisa Wheelahan, *A Policy Framework to Support a New Social Settlement in TAFE*, John Cain Foundation, Melbourne, 2019, p.7.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Noonan and Sarah Pilcher, *Participation in Tertiary Education in Australia: Modelling and Scenario Analysis*, Mitchell Institute, Melbourne, April 2018, pp. 5, 13, 10.

<sup>9</sup> Computed from Australian Government Department of Jobs and Small Business data at:

<http://lmip.gov.au/default.aspx?LMIP/EmploymentProjections>

<sup>10</sup> Jussi Välimaa and Reetta Muhonen, ‘Reproducing Social Equality across the Generations: The Nordic Model of High Participation Higher Education in Finland’, in Brendan Cantwell, Simon Marginson and Anna Smolentseva (eds), *High Participation Systems of Higher Education*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2018, passim and pp. 359, 358.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 369, 370, 365, 380, 368-369. <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 381, 369, 379, 381, 369, 379, 380.

<sup>13</sup> Simon Marginson, *Higher Education and the Common Good*, Melbourne University Publishing, Melbourne, 2016, pp. 15, 51, 267, 272. <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 72.

<sup>15</sup> Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Education at a Glance 2014*, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris, 2014, p. 93.



# Supporting students with disability

Studying at TAFE can be challenge for any student, and with around 4.3 million people in Australia recognised as having a disability there is a fair chance that many of our TAFE students will require disability support services while they are enrolled with us. Providing these services is a mandatory requirement for every TAFE across Australia. Yet, maintaining this support has become increasingly difficult due to community service obligation funding cuts, even though expectations are that TAFE will continue to provide these services.



Maureen Turner and Matthew Marshall

## MICHELLE PURDY

**A**LL students have an equal right to access good quality vocational education to achieve their personal goals for learning, meaningful employment or even independent living skills. Whatever learning needs a student with a disability requires to achieve access

and equity, staff and programs at TAFE, both teaching and educational support staff do their best to enable that to happen. Whether you are a Disability Liaison Officer in Tasmania or a Disability Teacher Consultant in New South Wales these well trained staff make a positive difference to students' learning and outcomes.

Once enrolled in a program students with

a disability or significant medical condition may need additional support ranging from something as simple as an ergonomic chair to the more sophisticated assistive technology. Alternatively, ensuring there is reasonable adjustment made to learning materials or assessment conditions. There are many ways that these educational support staff can help




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*“For me it has become the job of a lifetime. It’s encouraging to see students develop their skills and move on in their pathways. It feels good to know that I have been a small part in their progress”*

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bridge the gap where one or more disabilities may otherwise be barriers to success.

While not every branch of our union covers non-teaching staff they are valued members in TAFE in their own right and do their utmost to provide a supported learning experience.

Teachers can take advantage of the disability support services in their own institute when students enrol into their class. When a student discloses that they have a disability or a significant medical condition then that is the time to have a discussion regarding what supports need to be put in place or what strategies work for that individual. Whether the student is vision or hearing impaired, on the spectrum, has an intellectual disability, mental health, acquired brain injury or many other challenges, there is usually some way forward.

Growing numbers of people seeking places in vocational education have mental health conditions such as anxiety and panic disorders, depression and bipolar. Sometimes determining a safe place on campus where the student can go when anxiety or panic sets in may be needed. Assistive technology such as a reading program where the text is heard instead of read can increase comprehension. Ensuring students have a learning access plan in place from the beginning of their study to identify the appropriate supports for each individual may mean the difference between success and failure.

In addition to enrolling in mainstream programs some students may choose to undertake study in a class designed for people with an intellectual disability and/or cognitive impairment. One such course is the Work Pathways program at TasTAFE. Students in this class focus on improving their literacy and numeracy, planning their personal vocational pathway and gaining work readiness skills for employment. Student Zoe Dixon has an acquired brain injury from a car accident and is finding the course invaluable. “I want to be more independent and build my self-confidence and to be more positive in my thinking. I’m now taking small steps since my accident.”

Through many practical learning applications and opportunities to gain real work experience the Work Pathways program is able to help engage students in community based activities on and off campus. In the classroom there is a teacher and a VET Student Assistant who can work one-on-one with students or in small groups to maximise learning.

Maureen Turner (pictured) is a VET Student Assistant in the Work Pathways Program at TasTAFE Burnie campus. Initially she was reticent when she got the call to undertake some casual work with the class, but she fell in love with it. “For me it has become the job of a lifetime. It’s encouraging to see students develop their skills and move on in their pathways. It feels good to know that I have been a small part in their progress” she said.

Matthew Marshall (pictured) has used the work pathways course to gain some paid and volunteer work as a teacher assistant at Parklands High School. “My goals is to get a full-time job and the work pathways course will help me do that” he said.

A great resource for educators is *A Good Practice Guide: Supporting tertiary students with a disability or mental illness* produced by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research in 2015. This provides a clear and concise read for both teaching and disability service staff based in tertiary education settings. The guide outlines practical ways in which we can provide learning supports that both improve educational outcomes and experiences for students with a disability or mental illness.

Like everyone, students with disability deserve every chance to set and have opportunities to achieve their personal goals. If there is a need to make adjustments or provide additional technological or emotional support then that is what should happen or every attempt made to do so. TAFE has always been a place where anyone could find a path to a new future and we must continue to hold to that ideal. ●

*Michelle Purdy is TAFE President*





# Around Australia

## NEW SOUTH WALES

MAXINE SHARKEY

**T**AFE Teachers in NSW are reeling in response to their employer's late discovery or understanding of their obligations under the Standards for RTOs Act 2015 (as amended in 2019). Since 2012 in preparing for the introduction of the contestable funding model, Smart and Skilled, TAFE NSW has undertaken continuous reviews, restructures and redundancies. Figures obtained from Enterprise Ballots show that the TAFE NSW teaching/education workforce diminished by 7,583 during the period 2012-2016.

This has included the demise of curriculum centres, industry skills units, heads of studies, faculty managers and industry specialists, whose roles included ensuring TAFE NSW was prepared for changes to teaching requirements and legislation, emerging demands and industry peaks and troughs. During this period of flux TAFE NSW has cycled through three managing directors and four Ministers.

The most recent restructure, combining 10 almost autonomous Institutes, which were individual RTOs, into ONE TAFE – or, one RTO, has been immensely destabilising for educational delivery. Teachers and head teachers have been cut so drastically that TAFE management has placed restrictions on leave and denied release from face to face teaching. Teachers have been denied leave to attend conferences, return to industry or to undertake relevant industry engagement. At the same time, teachers in skills shortage areas are undertaking excess teaching hours each week to help sections meet demand.

Successive industrial implements have diminished Professional Development for teachers from a minimum of 72 annual hours, to 36 and ultimately to the current 20 hours per year, which has been interpreted by TAFE as a maximum rather than minimum.

Yet, TAFE NSW is now demanding teachers undertake the gargantuan task of mapping their professional qualifications to each competency (not course) they teach; detailing how they have maintained currency within their professional industry or trade to allow them to teach each competency. Many teachers cover hundreds of competencies in their annual teaching program.

At the same time, TAFE is demanding teachers with higher education adult teaching qualifications demonstrate how this qualification relates to the most current certificate IV training and assessment requirements. In order to ensure teachers complete this undertaking, TAFE is requiring teachers to attend a compulsory five hour Professional Development session in the non-teaching weeks. This five hour session is for teachers to be told how they will undertake this task, not to assist them in doing it; leading many to speculate just how many hours will need to be spent on actually completing the task. Of course, this compulsory mid-year session, will leave less than 15 hours of guaranteed professional development time for every teacher for the rest of the year – an irony completely lost on TAFE NSW management. The union is continuing in discussions with TAFE on this matter. ●

## QUEENSLAND

DAVID TERRAUDS

**F**ORMAL negotiations for a replacement enterprise bargain for TAFE Queensland have been under way since early April. The QTU is pursuing issues around workload and programming, increased pay and permanency.

TAFE Queensland's log of claims addresses flexibility of hours and the parties agree that there are two new positions to be included within the industrial instruments. One is the Educational Team Leader role (a hybrid teacher manager role) and the other category is Higher Education lecturer positions. Both these roles have been employed previously on individual contracts and the aim is to make them a part of the Award and Certified Agreement.

The QTU is balloting members on taking protected industrial action should it be necessary. The current agreement expires on 30 June and there is still significant work to be done in achieving an outcome in a timely fashion to secure a 1 July start date for the new agreement.

TAFE Queensland Brisbane hosted a one-day state wide forum to assess workload associated with the current AMEP/SEE contract. It was evidenced that there are significant contrasting requirements for educators and TAFE Queensland is proposing a rewrite of curriculum and production of an assessment bank. While the matter is not resolved the outcome of the forum underlines why AMEP/SEE teachers at Logan and Southbank are currently working to rule.

Central Queensland University finds itself at the mercy of the multi speed economy with suitably qualified trades people with skills and inclination to teach into Vocational Education at a premium. With an improvement in the mining sector in Central Queensland there is strong competition for tradies and teaching vacancies are proving difficult to fill particularly in the metal trades. ●

# Around Australia

## VICTORIA

ELAINE GILLESPIE

THE State budget focus on vocational education and training (VET) bodes well for the future of Victorian TAFE, with an extra \$41.2m to continue the rollout of the Free TAFE program, \$57 million towards upgrades and new TAFE facilities, \$10.3 million for apprenticeship initiatives and a further \$82.7 million for more places in TAFE and other training organisations for new training places in areas of Victorian workplace and industry priorities.

Two early childhood qualifications have been added to the initiative, at a cost of \$28.5m, meaning that from 2020 eligible students enrolling in the Certificate III or Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care will not pay tuition fees.

Although the deadline for workplans to be agreed has well and truly passed, we are aware that many members are still facing issues in obtaining either an agreed or a default workplan. This has largely been due to the new definition of teacher, which includes supervision (such as required in practical assessment), pastoral care and counselling related to student progression within a unit or course being disputed.

The AEU has been meeting with the Victorian TAFE Association (VTA) and DET to address this issue. To date the meetings have proved valuable and we are starting to see a way forward.

We continue to argue that supervision, which is a necessity in practical assessment and duty of care, is included in the definition of teaching within the 800 hours and therefore practical assessment must be counted within the 800 hours. Also, we continue to explain that the nature of Competency-Based Training means that teaching, assessment and supervision usually happen simultaneously and cannot be divided into neat segments of time as proposed by the VTA tool.

In addition to the workplan issue we have also had major concerns with the VTA's self-appointed review of teacher's higher quali-

fications to be able to progress to the highest teacher classification in the new agreement.

During several of our implementation meetings with the VTA, we requested to be provided with the documentation and procedure for their non-agreed qualification assessment process. On finally receiving this information we realised that the process lacked the depth and integrity required to make a fair and effective assessment. Therefore, we have begun the intensive process of mapping qualifications against the agreement criteria, to ensure our members are having eligible qualifications recognised.

On 23 May, Victoria University withdrew its application to the Fair Work Commission (FWC) to have their non-union agreement approved. This is a great outcome, reflecting the union's efforts to ensure our members' conditions are maintained and improved.

The AEU and Victoria University recommended negotiations and following weeks of discussion we reached in-principle agreement on June 7 with the university for a new vocational teacher agreement which:

- Delivers salary increases of almost 24% over the life of the agreement through to 2021
- Maintains the industry standard of 42 weeks attendance for ongoing and fixed-term teachers
- Limits sessional employment to 544 hours per year which will lead to more secure employment
- Ensures that Victoria University undertake an annual conversion process for sessional and fixed-term teachers to maximise secure employment
- Makes workplans and a new definition of teaching central to managing and improving teacher workload
- Introduces 20 days family and domestic violence leave.

## Federation University

The final few clauses for the Federation University agreement have been finalised and, upon time of printing, it was set to go to a ballot.

## RMIT

The new agreement at RMIT has been approved at the FWC and commenced implementation on 6 June, which will be supported with meetings and an implementation guide for our members. ●

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

TONY SUTHERLAND

WHERE to from here? The disappointing election of the Morrison Government will result in the SA Liberal Government continuing to drive for a fully contestable market in VET and seeking major efficiency gains from TAFE.

Along with the closure of a number of recently named campuses, TAFESA have commenced a review into two areas. One is described as 'transforming the student experience' and is aimed at reducing administration staff by about 60 FTE. The Union is concerned what the decrease in administrative staff will have on the work loads of lecturers. The other review is into the educational business units which will see a reduction in lecturing staff in some programs with about 35 FTE being offered TVSPs.

Pursuant to Section 76(6) of the SA Fair Work Act, 1994 the AEU has to inform the Department of Treasury and Finance of its intention to begin negotiations for a new Enterprise Agreement to replace the existing TAFE SA Education Staff Enterprise Agreement 2016. AEU TAFE members are determined to fight to ensure the maintenance of current conditions which will come under attack by the State Government. Members have identified the following key areas to be addressed; better remuneration, quality jobs that are secure and safe, addressing gender inequality, workloads that are reasonable, sustainable & not excessive, improved access to quality and relevant professional development, enhanced redeployment, retraining and redundancy provisions and better work travel arrangements.

National TAFE day 2019 was bigger and better than ever with a showcase of teaching





programs and students work in Adelaide central campus. The day provides an opportunity to highlight the work of TAFE teachers and highlight the innovative and creative things they do to enhance the learning journeys of their students. ●

## TASMANIA

SIMON BAILEY

**I**N JUNE I represented the TAFE Division of the Tasmanian Branch of the AEU at the National Youth Commission Inquiry into youth employment and transition.

We have seen a steady decline of VET opportunities provided to our youth who are not completing their Tasmanian Certificate of Education. With youth unemployment sitting so high there needs to be a unified effort by the public providers of VET education in providing well-resourced and affordable opportunities for our youth. Opportunities need to be created which supports our youth accessing programs which lead to positive outcomes which meet the needs of the students, industries and communities.

There has been a reduction of the number of pathway / CERT II programs across the state by either not providing staff to deliver the programs or by moving programs to other locations with evidence of this happening provided. Senior TasTAFE management have stated that they are reviewing CERT II programs to see which are viable to run.

It is hard to understand that, when we have growth in the building, hospitality, tourism and agricultural sectors and high youth unemployment rate why these pathway programs are not being offered. The logic behind the reduction in programs seems to be linked to a lack of foresight and planning which has meant that in many cases there are no teachers to run the courses as well as a lack of funding required to deliver the programs in the first place.

TAFE needs to be recognised as the public provider of VET education and not a business which is expected to provide programs based on financial viability rather than student outcomes.

Unless the TAFE sector gets the support required to run these programs we will not see the educational outcomes of our youth improved nor our communities and industry prosper. ●

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

GARY HEDGER

**O**VER 300 lecturers have been made permanent out of the Commissioners Instruction number 22 process with nine members' matters still to be resolved. Two hundred were made permanent through an automatic process for those with four or more years of service on a fixed term contract with the rest being converted via business case analysis.

In addition to wins gained through changes to the General Agreement, approximately 100 already permanent lecturers have had their permanent fraction increased through a range of actions at the college level.

Currently colleges are working with the union to implement the Commissioners Instruction number 23 conversion process. There have been over 40 joint union/employer information sessions held across the state and countless members were assisted in putting in submissions to the review. Colleges are expected to put their positions to all lecturers being reviewed by the end of June 2019. After that the union will be assisting members through any appeals.

Casual lecturers have begun to be offered fixed term contracts if their employment is expected to exceed six weeks. The parties are currently negotiating a policy to help facilitate this provision.

Since its implementation there have been significant technical issues and workload increases for lecturers using the new student management system. The main areas are problems particularly around enrolments, provision of class rolls and the recording of engagements, attendance and results. The Union and the Department has begun drafting a new policy regarding class sizes. ●

## ACT

KAREN NOBLE

**T**HERE are some positive things for 2019. Our Enterprise Agreement (EA) was supported after being put to the vote, twice, due to some voting instruction and communication glitches. Pay increases and back pay are expected in the next two months while the full Agreement is with Fair Work for consideration. It will be two years since members received a pay increase.

Implementation of the EA will need serious attention. Casual teaching hours will be closely monitored and contracts are to be offered where there has been more than eight hours of casual teaching for more than four weeks. The pooling of teaching duties and hours can now be implemented within teaching teams and there is a small increase in Professional Development allocated hours to assist teachers with both professional/trade and educational currency.

Other positives include: the election of an AEU member to the CIT Board, a strong CIT member presence and the ACT Public Education Dinner and Awards evening and the maintenance of CIT membership numbers. Many permanent and contract teachers have left CIT employment, so the maintenance of member numbers is a great achievement.

The ACT Budget indicates ongoing support of CIT and flags some major infrastructure and campus developments over the next few years.

Teachers and Support staff continue to put students first. Serious budget pressure pervades the organisation evidenced by budget cuts, short term contracts and future uncertainty, despite some positives. ●



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